

# Restoring Lake Erie in Ohio

## Habitat Restoration and Invasive Species Removal



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[lakeerie.ohio.gov/GLRI](http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/GLRI)



A seasonal crew sprays to control invasive species in a wet meadow habitat in the Maumee Area of Concern.

### Selected Accomplishments:

A habitat restoration project in the Ashtabula River Area of Concern (AOC) will remove three Beneficial Use Impairments, bringing the area closer to delisting. This site promises high levels of success because it is located on a long stretch of riverbank that is not sheet-piled and will be protected via an environmental covenant with the property owner.

A project to control invasive plants in the Grand River treated over 654 acres of invasive plants in priority areas of the Grand River watershed on partner properties, and over 8 acres on private properties. They also completed a river survey of invasive plants on 67 miles of the Grand River.

The Ohio DNR, Division of Wildlife found a surprising amount of habitat and potential habitat in the urban Cuyahoga River, which presents many opportunities for city residents. A very successful sampling season found good numbers and diversity of fish and other organisms.

A total of 192 acres of wet prairie in the Maumee AOC have received invasive plant removal treatments, including shrub removal, canopy reduction and tree removal, herbicide application, and prescribed fire.

In its first year, the Aquatic Invasive Species information campaign reached an estimated 5,120,883 individuals (105% of proposed for the project's duration) through presentations, exhibits, media coverage, and other events. Post-event evaluations of the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!™ campaign showed a 22% increase in respondents who were aware of AIS issues, and a 33% increase in respondents who indicated that they would more often take actions to prevent the spread of AIS. Television and newspaper coverage of an April 2011 conference with Sen. Sherrod Brown (Cleveland) may have reached in excess of 1 million people.

### Habitat and Invasive Species Projects

Projects fell into two broad categories: reestablishing ecosystem services, and protecting existing biodiversity. There is good evidence for success at the local level in terms of number of species conserved and areas treated and restored.

Questions remaining to be answered include: how does this site-specific information relate to overall Lake Erie habitats and biodiversity? What if all possible sites were restored?

### Public Benefits

Public benefits of these projects accrue from restored ecosystem services, which reduce costs associated with invasive species and loss of biodiversity, as well as by improving water flow and water quality at the sites.

Other benefits to the public include an improvement in aesthetics and views, particularly in highly visible projects like the Ashtabula River and the Northwest Ohio Oak Openings parks. There is a new demand to live in downtown Cleveland, and as the habitat and trails projects proceed in that area, they form a positive feedback loop that

encourages additional people to come downtown. The aesthetic component also contributes to economic benefits as nearby property values increase.

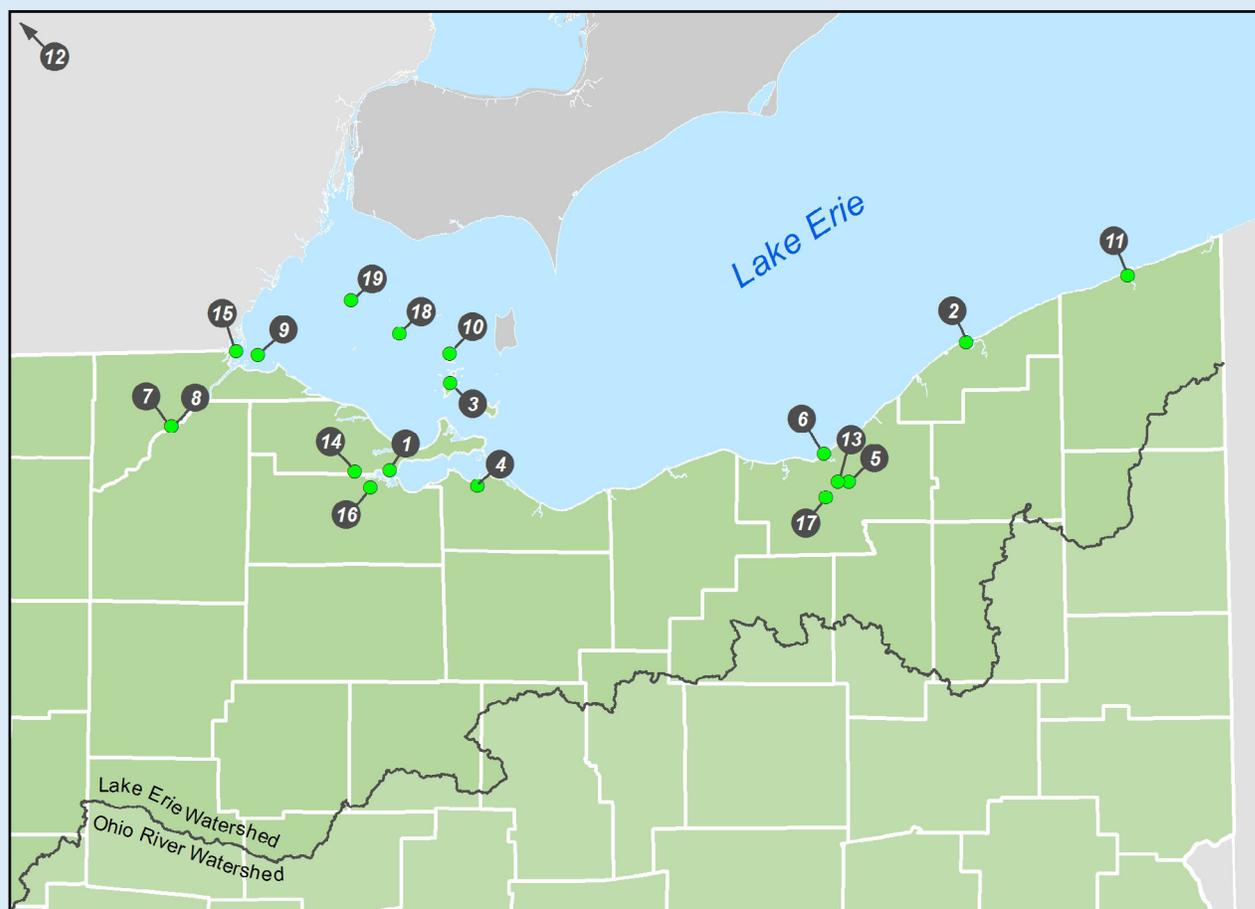
### Economic Benefits

Economic benefits of habitat restoration and removal of invasive species remain difficult to quantify fully due to the uncertain values of restored ecosystem services. However, the funds for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative leveraged significant additional dollars spent by project partners and other stakeholders to complete these and complimentary projects.

Moving towards delisting of Areas of Concern also creates potential for additional economic benefit and support. For example, the Ashtabula habitat project will remove the Beneficial Use Impairment designation, which in turn makes the last dredging project needed to complete the restoration of the AOC a feasible and highly desirable project.

Once the area is delisted, it is expected to contribute to the economic revitalization of downtown Ashtabula.





### Project Map

Projects shown on this map are identified by number and correspond to the numbered projects listed below.

For clarity, only one location is listed for each project. For some projects that occur across the basin or at multiple points (such as the Phragmites control projects), the location shown may indicate the location of the researcher or a single point within the area covered.

Details for individual projects are located at: <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/GLRI/SynthesisTeam/SynthTeamReports.aspx>.

### Habitat and Invasive Species Projects:

- 1 - The Nature Conservancy – Phragmites Control in Western Lake Erie Coastal Wetlands
- 2 - The Nature Conservancy – Invasive Plant Prevention & Control/ Grand River
- 3 - Ohio Sea Grant - A Comprehensive Regional Public Outreach Campaign on AIS (led by Minnesota Sea Grant)
- 4 - Ohio Sea Grant - Green Marina Education and Outreach Project
- 5 - Cuyahoga County Soil and Water Conservation District – Lacustrine Refuge in Cuyahoga AOC
- 6 - ODNR - Cuyahoga AOC Habitat and Fish Restoration
- 7 - Partners for Clean Steams – Restoring Ottawa River Wetlands & Habitat in the Maumee AOC
- 8 - The Nature Conservancy – Wet Prairie Restoration in Maumee AOC
- 9 - ODNR – Reforestation of Maumee Bay/Mary Jane Thurston State Parks
- 10 - ODNR - North Bass Island Restoration
- 11 - Ohio EPA – Ashtabula River AOC Habitat Restoration
- 12 - The Nature Conservancy – Blueprints for Conservation of Diversity (*project headquartered in Michigan*)
- 13 - Cleveland Metroparks - Invasive Plant Partnership in the Cuyahoga River Basin
- 14 - The Nature Conservancy - Long-term Phragmites Control through the Lake Erie CWMA
- 15 - Wayne State University - Invasive Species Early Warning System Validation in Toledo Harbor
- 16 - Ohio EPA - Lake Erie Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Watershed
- 17 - Cleveland Metroparks - West Creek Ecosystem Restoration Project
- 18 - Ohio Environmental Council - Coordinated Implementation Strategy for Lake Erie LaMP
- 19 - Ohio EPA - Ohio Lake Erie Phosphorus Task Force Phase II

More details on the individual projects are located at: <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/GLRI/SynthesisTeam/SynthTeamReports.aspx>.



Lake Erie Commission

